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ABSTRACT

In a climate of increasing concern with educational accountability and quality, it has been important to reappraise the issues of assessment and evaluation in relation to early childhood care and education. This document is comprised of three papers describing approaches to assessment and evaluation used in Te Whariki, a national curriculum statement and framework for early childhood education and care in New Zealand. The first paper, "An Update of Te Whariki, The New Zealand National Early Childhood Curriculum," describes the overall principles, strands, and goals for all early childhood programs, focusing on the fundamental principle of empowering children and outlining some implementation issues for early childhood centers. The second paper, "Project for Assessing Children's Experiences in Early Childhood Settings," outlines a three-phase research project to provide assessment guidelines for practitioners implementing Te Whariki: (1) developing an integrated structure of outcomes called the Learning Story framework; (2) implementing the framework in a variety of early childhood settings; and (3) developing resources for professional development. The third paper, "Developing a Framework for Self Evaluation of Early Childhood Programmes," outlines the policy context of evaluation and quality in New Zealand, describes an ethnographic study focusing identifying the key elements of program quality in relation to Te Whariki strands and goals which should be the focus of evaluation, and discusses how the Teaching Stories provide a focus for reflection and appraisal. Each paper contains references. (Author/JPB)

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LEARNING AND TEACHING STORIES

New approaches to assessment and evaluation in relation to Te Whāriki

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Symposium for
8th European Conference on Quality in Early Childhood Settings
Santiago de Compostela, Spain, September 1998

Margaret Carr **Helen May** **Val Podmore**

INSTITUTE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES
Te Pumanawa Rangahau Kohungahunga

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Photographs from Seatoun Kindergarten, Wellington (September 1997) show a wall montage for parents illustrating the links between the different activities in the kindergarten and the strands of *Te Whāriki*

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OVERALL ABSTRACT

During the past decade a number of countries have developed national curriculum statements and frameworks for schools and/or early childhood services. New Zealand is one of these. Two of the authors co-ordinated the development of *Te Whāriki* on behalf of the Ministry of Education. A number of articles and papers on this curriculum have been written and presented in both New Zealand international forums. In a climate of increasing concern with accountability and quality across the education sector it has been important to reappraise the issues of assessment and evaluation in relation to early childhood care and education. The development of *Te Whāriki* has posed particular challenges towards ensuring that the processes for assessment and evaluation are in the interests of children and their families and fit alongside the Principles of *Te Whāriki* itself. The Ministry of Education in New Zealand has contracted the authors to undertake research towards the development and trialling of some frameworks for assessment and evaluation. This symposium has three parts: Firstly a brief overview of the Principles and framework of *Te Whāriki* and an account of its early implementation. Secondly there is an outline of two follow-on research projects funded by the Ministry of Education: one on assessment and the second on evaluation. The full reports on these projects are:

- Carr, M (1998) *Project for Assessing Children's Experiences. Final Report to the Ministry of Education,* University of Waikato
- Podmore, V. May, H. with Mara, D. (1998) *Evaluating Early Childhood Programmes Using the Strands and Goals of Te Whāriki, the National Early Childhood Curriculum, Final Report on Phases One and Two to the Ministry of Education,* New Zealand Council for Educational Research

These separate projects have now entered a wider trialling phase as a Ministry of Education research contract:

- *An action research project for holistic assessment and evaluatiob in early childhood centres using the strands of Te Whāriki to trial the framework of "Learning and Teaching Stories"* Co-ordinators: Carr, May and Podmore.

There is also a parallel project co-ordinated by Diane Mara at the New Zealand Council for Educational Research:

- *Implementation of Te Whāriki in Pacific Island Early Childhood Centres*

SYMPOSIUM CONTENTS

***An Update of Te Whāriki*:** Margaret Carr and Helen May

Te Whāriki translates from the Maori language as "a mat for all to stand on." As a curriculum document it contains overall Principles, Strands and Goals for all early childhood programmes which in turn, "weave" or develop their own programme within the given framework. A fundamental Principle of *Te Whāriki* is the empowerment of children. *Te Whāriki* poses challenges to centres. This brief overview describes the framework of*Te Whāriki* and outlines some implementation issues for early childhood centres.

Project for Assessing Children's Experiences in early childhood settings

Margaret Carr

This paper outlines a Ministry of Education funded research project designed to provide assesment guidelines for practitioners implementing the new early childhood curriculum in New Zealand, *Te Whāriki*. There were three phases to the research programme. The first phase developed an integrated structure of outcomes: a structure that came to be called the Learning Story framework. In the second phase this framework was implemented in five very different early childhood settings: a sessional kindergarten programme, a childcare centre, a Maaori immersion Kohanga Reo , a playcentre, and a home-based setting. In the third phase resources for professional development in early childhood settings were developed.

Developing a framework for self evaluation of early childhood programmes

Helen May and Val Podmore

This paper outlines the policy context of evaluation and quality in New Zealand, and describes a Ministry of Education funded ethnographic research study in a range of centres. The research addresses the question: What are the key elements of programme quality in relation to the Strands and Goals of *Te Whāriki* which should be the focus of evaluation practice? The authors discuss how the analysis of the data provided the clues towards a possible framework for self evaluation by centres through the development of Teaching Stories as a focus for reflection and appraisal. This process begins with a series of five questions raised from a child's perspective. Each question is associated with one of the Five strands of *Te Whāriki*.

INTRODUCTION:

AN UPDATE OF TE WHĀRIKI,

THE NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM

Helen May and Margaret Carr

Introduction

In 1991 the authors were contracted by the Ministry of Education to co-ordinate the development of a national early childhood curriculum that would firstly, embrace a diverse range of early childhood services and cultural perspectives; secondly, articulate a philosophy of quality early childhood practice; and thirdly, make connections with the new national curriculum for schools. *Te Whāriki* was released to early childhood centres in late 1993 (Ministry of Education 1993a). There was an official process of trialling and evaluation which indicated a high level of support within the early childhood community for the document. In 1996 the Prime Minister of New Zealand launched the final version *of Te Whāriki, Early Childhood Curriculum* (Ministry of Education 1996a). Early childhood services are now required to demonstrate that their programmes are operating according to the Principles, Strands and Goals outlined in *Te Whāriki*. In 1994 the Ministry of Education contracted a range of professional development projects to support early childhood practitioners in coming to understand and work with the document.

The Ministry has subsequently funded research projects to develop frameworks for evaluation and assessment based on the Principles, Strands, and Goals outlined in *Te Whāriki*. These are the focus of the following papers. There are, however, many issues for centres regarding the implementation of *Te Whāriki*. Firstly, current low regulatory requirements and funding levels make it difficult for centres to meet the high expectations of quality outlined in *Te Whāriki*. Secondly, the holistic and bicultural approach to curriculum of *Te Whāriki*, which is inclusive of children from birth, is a challenge to practitioners who are more familiar with the traditional focus on separate play areas and activities for preschool aged children in mainstream centres. Thirdly, the current political climate of accountability makes more demands than previously on early childhood practitioners in relation to curriculum, assessment and evaluation. Much of this is a new language for early childhood practitioners some of whom (although not all) are volunteers, and/or are poorly paid and/or have low levels of training. So far there is little extra resourcing to support centres to manage the extra work implementing a new curriculum involves, and part of the rationale for the authors' involvement in research on assessment and evaluation was to develop resources to support practitioners in the centres.

The broader context

During the past decade Western governments have articulated more clearly the connections between the economic success of the nation and education. The intent has been to increase the skill base of the future workforce to ensure that the economy can benefit from sufficient workers who have a high level and flexibility of skills for work in the new technological era. Supporting this shift has been the impact of 'new right' economic views which seeks to identify the benefits from government investment in education. Under attack have been so-called laissez faire progressive approaches to curriculum which relied more on child and/or teacher interest and articulated ideals of individual growth and development. There is pressure for curriculum statements which detail specific content-based knowledge and skills and more rigorous approaches to assessment and evaluation.

The New Zealand Government had not previously been concerned with curriculum in the early childhood sector (Carr and May 1993a). Each of the different early childhood services (such as playcentre, kindergarten, childcare, Kohanga Reo, family daycare, Pacific Island language centre etc) had their own approaches to curriculum, although the term curriculum itself was rarely used. In 1989 policy reforms established a common formula for funding, administration and regulations across all early childhood services known as the Before Five policy. With government funding then reaching an average of 50% of operating costs of early childhood centres, alongside a new policy of a 'seamless' education system from birth to tertiary (Ministry of Education, 1994), there was sufficient rationale for government to justify an interest in the early curriculum itself.

Early childhood organisations were originally wary of the idea of a national early childhood curriculum; concerned that it might constrain their independence and diversity. The alternative, of not defining the early childhood curriculum was, however, a potentially dangerous one for the early childhood organisations: the national curriculum for schools might start a downward move, particularly as the Government was introducing more systematic assessment during the school years. The curriculum project at the University of Waikato, which won the contract with Ministry of Education, was established in response to this latter concern.

Te Whāriki as a curriculum

During the early years of this decade the development of *Te Whāriki* involved a broad consultative process with all the services and organisations. The development process and the framework of *Te Whāriki* has been outlined more fully elsewhere (Carr and May 1993b, 1994) but it will be useful to summarise its key features here.

a) The weaving metaphor

The title *Te Whāriki* is a central metaphor. Firstly, the early childhood curriculum is envisaged as a whāriki, a woven mat for all to stand on. The Principles Strands and Goals defined in the document provide the framework which allows for different programme perspectives to be woven into the fabric of the weaving. There are many possible 'patterns' for this. This is a curriculum without 'recipes', providing 'threads' for individuals and centres to develop their own curriculum weaving through a process of talk, reflection, planning, evaluation and assessment. Secondly, it describes a 'spider web' model of curriculum for children, in contrast to a 'step' model (Eisner, 1985:143). The 'step' or 'staircase' model conjures up the image of a series of independent steps that lead to a platform from which the child exits and at which point measurable outcomes can be identified. The *Te Whāriki* model views the curriculum for each child as more like a 'spider web' or weaving and emphasises a model of developing knowledge and understanding for young children as a tapestry of increasing complexity and richness.

b) A developmental continuum

Te Whāriki defines three age groups (infants, toddlers and the young child) but consistent with the idea of the curriculum for each child as being more like a weaving than a flight of stairs, we do not see these as self contained stages. We suggest that learning and growing during the early childhood years should be seen as part of a continuum, linked to age but recognising that development will vary for individual children in unpredictable ways. The direction and speed of development will fluctuate for each child on a daily basis. Where they are, who they are with, and what the children perceive as the agenda, will all make a difference. *Te Whāriki* emphasises that curriculum for the early childhood years must be able to embrace the everyday realities of: rapid change, leaps and regressions, uneven development, and individual differences.

c) The Principles, Strands and Goals

Coming to see that a national early childhood curriculum must be strongly grounded in the social and cultural context (Vygotsky 1978; Bruner and Haste 1987), and exploring the connections between this and notions of 'development' became part of the journey towards the theoretical framework of *Te Whāriki*. The 1993 draft of *Te Whāriki* detailed a number of sources of curriculum and expressed the view that the early childhood curriculum is about experiences that are: humanly, nationally, culturally, developmentally, individually and educationally appropriate. The 1996 final document sets the curriculum within an ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner 1979) with the sources of curriculum ranging out from the individual child as a learner within their particular environment, to be finally shaped by a nation's beliefs and values about children.

The final model was grounded in our own New Zealand social and cultural contexts, but current knowledge about child development and learning shaped the principles, processes

and practices for realising the Aims for Children (later to become Strands) and Goals (Carr and May 1993a, 1994). The theme of empowering children to learn and grow was established early in the curriculum development process and incorporates both the developmental and social/cultural contexts of the curriculum. This became a foundation Principle. Three further guiding Principles were established: that the curriculum should (a) reflect the holistic way children learn and grow, (b) enable children to learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people places and things, and (c) include the wider world of family, whanau and community.

A dual set of parallel Strands in Māori and English were developed. They are not translations of one another but the domains of empowerment they describe are seen as equivalent in both cultures.

MANA ATUA	WELL-BEING
MANA WHENUA	BELONGING
MANA TANGATA	CONTRIBUTION
MANA REO	COMMUNICATION
MANA AO TUROA	EXPLORATION

The conceptualisation of an early childhood curriculum around these Strands takes a different approach to the more traditional developmental curriculum map of: physical, intellectual, emotional and social (PIES) skills. Instead the Strands integrate all aspects of development by defining the major interests of infants, toddlers and young children: emotional and physical **well-being,** a feeling that they **belong** here, making a **contribution** and being recognised as an individual, an interest in **communicating** through language and symbols and a capacity to **explore** and make sense of the environment. Each Strand has been elaborated into Goals for Learning and Development which in the final version of *Te Whäriki* also detailed a range of indicative, but not required, learning outcomes (ie knowledge, skills and attitudes) for young children.

> In early childhood, holistic, active learning and the total process of learning are emphasised. Knowledge, skills and attitudes are closely linked. These three aspects combine together to form a child's "working theory" and help the child develop dispositions that encourage learning. (*Te Whāriki*, p 44)

Implementing *Te Whāriki* to make a difference for children

Transforming a national curriculum into practice to make a difference for children in early childhood programmes is the challenge, and like the weaving metaphor of *Te Whāriki* the process is a complex criss-cross of connecting threads of training, professional development, research, policy and funding. The long journey towards turning adult words into realities for children has been documented more fully elsewhere (May and Carr, 1997, 1998). The Ministry of Education's division of Curriculum Implementation co-ordinates the development

and implementation of the new national curricula for early childhood programmes and schools. For all curriculum documents there is a similar process of consultation and development, trialling, professional development, redrafting and regulatory ratification and resource development.

Assessment and evaluation processes are becoming a key consideration for early childhood centres particulary as the Education Review Office requires evidence of systematic planning for children and the programme as a whole. Assessment and evaluation guidelines for *Te Whāriki* have not yet been written and in the meantime there are a wide variety of approaches being used, some of which cause the authors concern.

The research literature on assessment in early childhood burgeoned in the 1990s, much of it spearheaded by researchers in the UK (e.g. Blenkin and Kelly, 1992; Drummond, 1993; Pascal Bertram and Ramsden, 1994). In New Zealand a Ministerial Working Party on *Assessment for Better Learning* (1990 p.8) set some guidelines: "The primary purpose of assessment should be to provide information which can be used to identify strengths and guide improvement". Given a curriculum model (such as *Te Whāriki)* that sees learning as the development of more complex and useful understanding knowledge and skill attached to cultural and purposeful contexts rather than as a staircase of individually acquired skills, the assessment and evaluation of children and programmes becomes a complex matter. Finely focused 'snapshot' assessments are inappropriate and unreliable for the majority of young children (Barnett, MacMann and Carey 1992). Given, too, a curriculum where knowledge skills and attitudes often coalesce into learning strategies attitudes and dispositions, traditional assessments of observable skills become problematic. The idea of the individual assessment of children (often perceived as formal and written) is viewed with alarm by many early childhood practitioners; we regarded with interest the UK SCAA (1995) *Draft Desirable Outcomes for Pre-school Education* document which stated (p.7) that evaluation of quality will be based on a judgement 'about the extent to which the quality of the provision is appropriate to the desirable outcomes, rather than on the achievement of the outcomes themselves by individual children'. In New Zealand in 1992 *Desirable Objectives and Practices* (Ministry of Education, 1992) were gazetted by the government as requirements for funded centres. These indicated that planning and evaluation procedures must be specified, and provision must be made to discuss children's 'progress' and daily programme with parents and families. The revised and newly gazetted *Statement of Desirable Objectives and Practices* (Ministry of Education 1996b) state that evaluation and assessment practices must be in accordance with the four Principles *of Te Whāriki*..

There have been two Ministry of Education funded research projects looking at formative approaches to evaluation and assessment 'in tune' with the Principles and Strands of *Te Whāriki*. Margaret Carr co-ordinated the assessment project at the University of Waikato and Helen May (from Victoria University Wellington) and Val Podmore (from the

New Zealand Council of Education Research) co-ordinated a parallel project on evaluation. From 1998 these interconnected projects continue as a joint project, again funded by the Minsitry of Education. It is hoped that the Ministry of Education has the patience to wait and get it right rather than impose inappropriate measures in this climate of increasing accountability. The two papers presentations in this symposium outline the work of these projects and introduce the next phase of this research which is an action research project trialling some proposed frameworks for assessment and evaluation in a range of sites and centres. The framework is based on a teacher-and-family-friendly notion of constructing Learning and Teaching Stories.

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A PROJECT FOR ASSESSING CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS

Margaret Carr

Assessment and the New Zealand curriculum: reconceptualised outcomes

The *Te Whāriki* curriculum framework for New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 1996; Carr and May, 1998) recognises new conceptions of early childhood curriculum (Kessler and Swadener, 1992). The old conceptions included the traditional assumption that learning in early childhood is about acquiring the early rungs of a hierarchy of defined knowledge and skill, a process that begins the climb up the ladder to grown-up ways of thinking and learning. And they included what Freire (1970) has called a 'banking' model of education, where teachers deposit information into learners. They encouraged deficit models of assessment that assume a body of required skill and knowledge and fragment children's experiences into items of knowledge and skill separated from the physical social or cultural context. The old conceptions focus on the learner as an individual, and learning as furniture in the mind.

The new conceptions recognise that it is in early childhood that children receive their first messages about who is of value and how 'we' respond to differences (Sapon-Shevin, 1992; Siraj-Blatchford, 1994), about what is fair play and justice (Katz, 1984), about what it will mean to grow up being male or female (Davies, 1989; McNaughton, 1997), about 'possible selves' (Markus and Nurius, 1986), and about what it is to be a learner. They focus on the learner as an individual-in-action, and learning as transacted and distributed (Salomon, 1993). Four guiding principles in *Te Whāriki* established this new conception of curriculum: empowerment (*whakamana*), holistic development (*kotahitanga*), family and community (*whānau tangata*), and relationships (*nga hononga*). The English version of these principles is as follows: the early childhood curriulum empowers the child to learn and grow; the early childhood curriculum reflects the holistic way children learn and grow; the wider world of family and community is an integral part of the early childhood curriculum; children learn through responsive relationships with people places and things. In other words, the curriculum is designed to be empowering, holistic, transactional, and ecological. Formative assessment procedures must therefore also be empowering, holistic, transactional, and ecological.

From 1995 to 1997 a Ministry funded research project - the Project for Assessing Children's Experiences (PACE) - looked for a way of doing this. Directed by the author and based at the University of Waikato, PACE included three phases: Phase One established a framework for assessment, Phase Two trialled the framework in five different settings, and Phase Three developed a video package for practitioners (Carr, 1998; Carr, forthcoming). This paper outlines some of the outcomes of Phase One and Phase Two.

In the new curriculum the children's learning outcomes are summarised in two ways:

(i) as *'working theories'* that children will develop about themselves and about the people places and things in their lives. These working theories 'become increasingly useful for making sense of the world, for giving a child control over what happens, for problem-solving, and for further learning' (Ministry of Education, 1996 p.44), and

(ii) as *'dispositions'*, 'habits of mind' or 'patterns of learning'. The document adds that 'Dispositions provide a framework for developing working theories and expertise' (Ministry of Education, 1996 p.45).

The framework that emerged from PACE nested the second idea (dispositions) into the first (working theories). It looked for children's emerging working theories about what it is to be a learner, and about themselves as learners. And it developed the idea that these working theories were made up of packages of learning dispositions.

Learning dispositions

Dispositions in education have been described by Katz (1988 p.30) as 'habits of mind, tendencies to respond to situations in in certain ways'. More formally, she has defined a disposition as follows:

> A disposition is a pattern of behavior exhibited frequently and in the absence of coercion, and constituting a habit of mind under some conscious and voluntary control, and that is intentional and oriented to broad goals. (Katz, 1993, p.16)

PACE became interested in dispositions about *learning*. A disposition is a 'slippery' concept: inclinations must be guessed at from patterns of behaviour exhibited frequently, together with careful observation of the circumstances, observations over time, and perhaps discussion with children and their families. The inclination or the intention is not separate from the circumstances, and the unit of analysis of interest here is *action* (Wertsch, 1991 p.12) rather than behaviour. Action includes intention and meaning, and keeps the observation 'tethered' (Graue and Walsh, 1995 p.148) to the community.

> A key distinction we would make is between action and behavior. Action is located within specific cultural and historic practices and time. It is populated by meaning and intentions, and is tethered to particular communities and individuals. In contrast, behavior is stripped of these local characteristics; it is mechanical description without narration. To develop thick descriptions of children's actions, we must go beyond simply detailing what people are doing. Going beyond involves exploring meaning and intention. (Graue and Walsh, 1995 p.148)

The dispositions depend on the context and include the wisdom to know when they are or are not appropriate. Dispositions will be sensitive to occasion (Perkins Jay and Tishman, 1993) in three different ways: Firstly, it is not always appropriate for children to be, for example, persistent (a disposition of great interest to Carol Dweck and her colleagues in the United

States over a number of years; see Smiley and Dweck, 1994); or to trust the environment. Some tasks are too difficult or dangerous. Secondly, children may interpret certain occasions as inappropriate to, for example, persist with challenge. They may interpret carpentry as an occasion when girls do not tackle difficulty. In Phase One of PACE one child persisted in difficult circumstances when the topic was friendship, but not when the topic was technological (Carr, 1997a). Thirdly the occasion may be one in which the disposition is never featured (although it could be). There may, for instance, be no challenging activities, and the teachers may never engage the children in complex issues.

Katz (1988) separates out dispositions from knowledge, skills and feelings, but there are arguments for keeping them closely aligned. The more knowledge and skill one has in a particular topic or activity, the more one is (usually) inclined to become involved in it: one has more 'hooks' to connect new experiences to. If a child can use scissors competently, he or she may be more inclined to be interested in and involved in activities that require cutting. However, as Katz (1993) also points out, the acquisition of knowledge and skill does not guarantee that they will be used when the adult sees their use to be relevant. Research in Phase One of PACE indicated for instance that risk-taking and collaborative abilities revealed in sociodramatic play were not necessarily transferred over to more school-like construction activities (Carr, 1997b), and Dweck's research indicated that able students often refused to tackle difficult tasks.

Research tells us that learning dispositions are important and enduring (Sylva, 1994a, 1994b; Katz, 1993; Goleman, 1996; Smiley and Dweck, 1994). Dispositions are relevant for learning now, *and* they will influence learning in the future. Sylva (1994b) reviewed an extensive literature on the long-term effects of early childhood and school, and concluded (p.162) that

> pre-school experiences put in motion a virtuous cycle of learning orientation at school entry, followed by teacher recognition and expectation, followed by pupil self concept, school commitment and finally success in adult life.

Dispositions as aims or goals allows an assessment framework to follow a 'credit' rather than a 'deficit' model. If the aim of the curriculum is for an action to come to reflect a learning habit or pattern, then the role of the observer (or assessor) is to identify that action and its attendant context (place, activity, personal or cultural meaning, artifacts, people; Berg and Calderone, 1994) in order to encourage it to become a habit.

Observations during Phase One of PACE developed a framework of learning dispositions, linked to the strands of *Te Whāriki*:

- *courage* (and *curiosity*) to find something of interest here (belonging),
- *trust* that this is a safe enough place to be involved, focusing ones attention, and encouraging the *playfulness* that often follows from deep involvement over a period of time (well-being)
- *perseverance* to persist with difficulty or uncertainty (exploration),

- *confidence* to express an idea or a point of view (communication), and
- *responsibility* for justice and fairness and the disposition to take on another point of view (contribution).

This framework of dispositions emerged from observations of children finding something of interest, being involved, persisting with difficulty or uncertainty, expressing an idea or a point of view, and taking responsibility.

(a) Finding something of interest:

The research in Phase One defined these interests narrowly as 'discourses' (Carr, 1997b); in Phase Two an 'interest' was interpreted in its everyday sense: as a topic (Rosie was interested in sorting out the difference between friendly and scary), an activity (Robert was interested in, but anxious about, trying messy play), or a 'possible self' (Louise was interested in defining what it means to be a girl).

(b) Being involved:

The EEL project at Worcester (Pascal, Bertram, Ramsden, Georgeson, Saunders and Mould, 1995) defines a quality early childhood programme as one in which the children are involved, and they link this involvement to emotional well-being. In Phase One of PACE, children were often involved in a topic or activity of interest over a sustained period of time, especially when the activity was sociodramatic play or construction activity, or the topic was friendship. Meg, for example, worked for 33 minutes one morning with cardboard scissors stapler and cellophane to complete a hat that fitted her head and included a visor made from blue cellophane paper: she then wore it and commented that the world looked blue now. She had made hats before, and watched the other children making them, acquiring some of the knowledge and skill she needed for this new imaginative design.

(c) Persisting with difficulty:

There were many examples in Phase One of children avoiding difficulty in imaginative ways, and of pursuing it too. For example, Tom worked collaboratively with an adult to construct a monster from cardboard boxes: 14 of his 49 comments were questions about the construction ("Do you know how to make monsters?" "How're we gonna miss the teeth?") or explanation of difficulty ("The teeth are too far over there". "I can't put the head over there").

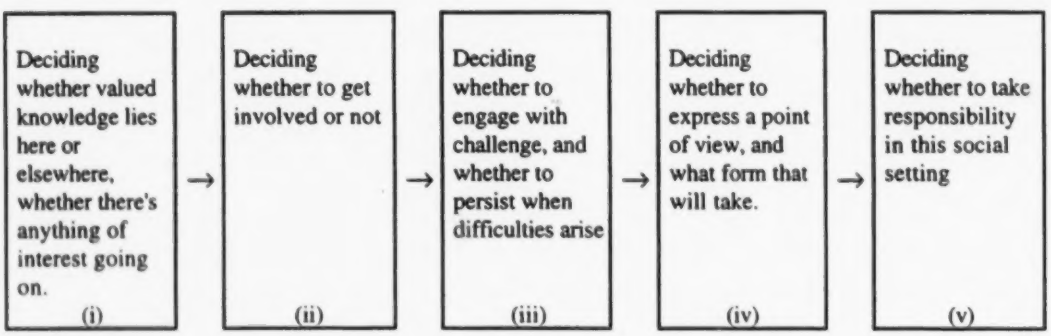
(d) Expressing an idea or a point of view:

In Phase One expressing an idea or a point of view was defined as taking the initiative in adult-child or child-child interactions. Examples included those episodes where adults were providing support for children's enterprises: the children were requesting attention, explaining what they were doing or about to do, contributing information on a range of topics, asking questions, giving instructions. In Phase Two a wider definition of expressing one's views or 'language' would be adopted, reflecting the title 'The Hundred Languages of Children' in Edwards, Gandini and Forman (1993).

(e) Taking another point of view (and taking responsibility in other ways):
In Phase One the research looked for adult-child and child-child interactions that could be described as examples of 'joint attention' (Rogoff, 1990; Moore and Dunham, 1995; Smith, 1996). Children were asking for and offering assistance, giving and receiving instructions, describing what's going on for the enlightenment of others, providing explanations at the right level as they tutored others, making personal contributions and analogies on the topic of joint attention, and responding to questions and requests from their peers for advice and approval. In Phase Two, practitioners found it useful to widen this definition of 'taking responsibility' in a range of ways, explained below.

Learning Stories

Another way of looking at these dispositions is to note that within any one particular topic or activity, children were making the following decisions, frequently in the following order:


Deciding whether valued knowledge lies here or elsewhere, whether there's anything of interest going on.
(i)
Deciding whether to get involved or not
(ii)
Deciding whether to engage with challenge, and whether to persist when difficulties arise
(iii)
Deciding whether to express a point of view, and what form that will take.
(iv)
Deciding whether to take responsibility in this social setting
(v)

A useful way to describe these chains or packages of decisions and the actions that accompanied them was to describe them as Learning Stories. In Phase Two, practitioners documented the children's learning by writing down Learning Stories: similar to 'critical incidents' (Tripp, 1993), they were chosen for their capacity to illustrate or highlight one or more of the five steps of the Learning Story framework. In effect, practitioners were action researchers, documenting and interpreting critical incidents. Because the surrounding context was of interest for planning, the practitioners were also participant observers: the Learning Stories often included their role in the action.

Learning narratives

When Learning Stories of a similar kind accumulate, they develop the dispositional quality of a 'template' or a *learning narrative*. One reason why it seems appropriate to call them narratives, is because they take on an authoritative voice. They summarise not only how things are, but how things *could* be (our sense of the possible), how things are *expected* to be, and how things *ought* to be (Bruner, 1996 p. 96). They also begin to channel the

children's experiences. They provide what in the biological literature are called 'niches', or comfortable and familiar ways to learn. For instance, learning with the other boys, as far away from an adult as possible, displaying that you are big and strong, can for some of the children take on the quality of a narrative about learning. Smiley and Dweck (1994), after extensive research on children's motivation over more than twenty years concluded (p.1741) that:

> children appear to have developed a mechanism for selecting learning opportunities, prior to formal school experiences.

I have called that mechanism for selecting learning opportunities a *learning narrative*. Here is a Learning Story from observations during Phase One of the project that could be described as learning narratives in action.

> Nell is making a cardboard tray so that she can paint in it by rolling a painted marble around. She says to Jason : "D'you know how you can cut it? 'Cos I don't". Jason helps her, saying "You just, and this pulls out there. You need to cut the top off. Don't cut that end off". (15/2FN&TTB34.44)

Nell admits that she does not know what to do, explaining clearly what her problem is; Jason gives advice. Jason has previously made his own marble-painting tray, and when he made his, he inadvertently cut off one end so that the marble kept falling out. He advises Nell not to make the same mistake. This story reflected an emerging narrative for Nell: it was the first time that she had been observed to say that she did not know what to do. Usually she avoided difficulty, and was anxious not to be seen to be unable. On the other hand, this incident reflected an established narrative for Jason: he frequently tackled created and persevered with challenge in a range of activities, was interested in the mistakes he had made, and encouraged the other children to tackle uncertainty in the same way.

Learning Stories in different settings: Phase two of PACE

In Phase Two of the Project, the researcher worked with practitioners in five early childhood settings, to trial assessment procedures based on the Learning Story framework that had emerged from Phase One. The Project moved from the "high ground" of research-based theory to the "swampy lowland" (Beckett, 1996 p 138) of real life in an early childhood setting, where problems are not well-formed, children's motivations are ambiguous, interpretations are uncertain, contexts are complex, and practitioners are busy and often without qualifications. Practitioners adapted the theoretical framework. They were enthusiastic about Learning Stories as an idea, and they used it to develop assessment procedures in very different ways. Some of the differences are summarised here:

(a) Finding an interest: For the child care centre the first step, 'finding an interest', was a focus for children who were new to the all day programme, or in transition from under-twos to over-twos. One of the definitions for this centre of 'finding an interest' was 'coping with

change'. *Belonging* was a key value. Graue (1998), writing about 'readiness' for child care or school, comments on the ways in which adults can help children to have *courage* at this time.

(b) Being involved:

In the child care centre and *te kōhanga reo*, 'being involved' included becoming familiar with routines: in *te kōhanga reo* (where the case study focused on the children's developing expertise in *te reo Māori*, Māori language) the *kaiako* (teacher) saw the language of routines as an early stage of involvement in *te reo*. In the kindergarten, where the programme was based on a project approach, a drawn plan was one of the criteria for involvement.

(c) Persisting with difficulty:

The nature of difficulty challenge and uncertainty was different in each programme, so the criteria for 'persistence with difficulty' was different as well. In the kindergarten, following a plan typically included representational spatial and technical difficulties. Both the kindergarten and the home-based setting were interested in children's 'puzzlement'.

(d) Expressing an idea or a point of view:

Each centre or setting was characterised by a particular pattern of 'languages' (using 'language' to mean a mode of communication expression or representation), although all of them included a basic set that included oral language, art, mathematics, literature, song, movement and dramatic play. Each programme therefore introduced a different pattern of criteria to describe step four. In the child care centre and the home-based setting pretend play was central, although other modes were in evidence as well. In all settings, children's increasing mastery of oral language was noted, and in *te kōhanga reo* especially, *nga kaiako* were puzzling over the order in which some of the language structures could be expected to appear.

(e) Taking responsibility:

In Phase One, 'taking responsibility' had emphasised joint attention (adult-child and child-child interactions where the initiative is shared). In Phase Two in the child care centre this step included taking responsibility for the well-being of others, and for the programme; in the kindergarten it included the co-construction of ideas; in the playcentre it included understandings about fairness; in the home-based setting negotiating and taking others' points of view in sociodramatic play featured strongly; in *te kōhanga reo* (where the language development was a focus) the way the children could change their register and their language when they talked to younger children was noted.

Reconceptualised ideas about progress

It was noted earlier in this paper that the new curriculum had rejected the traditional assumption that learning in early childhood is about acquiring the early rungs of a hierarchy of defined knowledge and skill. New conceptions of curriculum must provide new guidance for

practitioners who want to use their observations to improve learning, for formative assessment. PACE defined progress in the following ways:

(i) Stories become **longer**. An individual's learning stories would become longer, as within a particular topic or context the child would move on to steps further along the sequence. In one example, several learning stories indicated that Robert appeared to be very interested in messy play: finger painting especially. But when invited to join in and be involved he always shook his head or moved away. The staff decided to include him in the mixing of the paint at the beginning of the session, and to supply more aprons. He refused the aprons, but enjoyed the preparation process: it was an entrée into involvement. In another incident, one of the girls appeared to want to get involved in carpentry, but the boys were doing the 'hard' tasks for the girls, edging them out of involvement. The staff intervened, reminding and demonstrating to the children at just the right times that the girls were equally capable, and the girls joined in. In several centres joint attention episodes moved children from expressing their own point of view to listening to others.

(ii) Stories become more complex, or **deeper**. Rosie was particularly interested in notions of 'scary' and 'friendly', drawing animals that were 'scary' and animals that were 'friendly'. With the assistance of opportunities in the programme the expression of that interest spread from drawing to sociodramatic play and stories. In the same centre, Scott's interest in rhyming words was extended to poems and rhyming books.

(iii) The 'same' learning stories become more frequent, as dispositions and narratives are established: we could say that the stories become **wider**. Lisa became more confident to express her own ideas without waiting for praise and encouragement from an adult. Danny experimented again and again with the difficulties of screen printing and became an expert at producing screen prints of one of his favourite topics: small animals.

Learning Stories, often accompanied by photographs (in one centre, polaroid photographs) and children's work (often photocopied), provided guidelines for the adults' planning, and provided families with not only stories about the children's day but a view of the learning that was being valued and encouraged. In some cases children were involved in dictating stories, taking part in the assessment and valuing process.

Assessment and evaluation

A powerful influence on learning, often constraining curiosity and exploration, is the desire by learners to belong to a community. This aim of belonging can inhibit the kind of learning outlined in this paper if the community to which one aspires to belong is one in which

courage, playfulness, perseverance, communication, and responsibility are not valued. It is possible therefore to extrapolate from the notion of positive individual learning dispositions to a community and a programme that encourages and models them, a 'dispositional milieu', and this provides some guidance for change. The New Zealand curriculum adds:

> Dispositions to learn develop when children are immersed in an environment that is characterised by well-being and trust, belonging and purposeful activity, contributing and collaborating, communicating and representing, and exploring and guided participation.(Ministry of Education, 1996, p.45)

Given the reconceptualised framework for curriculum outlined at the beginning of this paper, where learning is seen to be transacted and distributed, the individual learner's experience is inextricably woven into the learning environment. Frameworks for the assessment of the individual learner will inform frameworks for the evaluation of the programme and the learning community, and vice versa. These connections form the topic of the third paper in this symposium, May and Podmore (1998).

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PROJECT FOR DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK FOR SELF EVALUATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMMES

Helen May and Val Podmore

Introduction

Te Whāriki, the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, was developed following wide consultation (May & Carr, 1997). An official trialing process demonstrated that the early childhood community strongly supported the document. The final version of *Te Whāriki* was launched by the government in 1996 (Ministry of Education, 1996). *Te Whāriki*, a curriculum specifically designed for children from birth to school entry, has four overall Principles: empowering children to learn and grow; holistic development; connections with family and community; and reciprocal, responsive relationships. There are five interweaving strands, and each strand has three or four goals. The strands are:

- Strand I : Mana Atua - Well-being
- Strand 2: Mana Whenua - Belonging
- Strand 3: Mana Tangata - Contribution
- Strand 4: Mana Reo - Communication
- Strand 5: Mana Aoturoa - Exploration

The political and pedagogical context of the later 1990s convinced us that this project was necessary, given a strong political climate of accountability in education; and strengthening requirements for early childhood programmes in terms of quality, standards, and a new curriculum. It was timely that there be comprehensive and focused research designed to guide management and staff towards appropriate evaluation processes for their own programmes. The aims of this research project are:

- To develop a cohesive framework for practitioners to undertake their own evaluation of programmes in a range of early childhood centres using *Te Whāriki*;
- To ensure that the framework developed is mindful of the range of ages of children, as well as what goes on in the different kinds of settings early childhood centres provide. (i.e., it is, like *Te Whāriki*, an inclusive curriculum document).

There are two overall research questions. The completed first stage of the project was designed to consult key informants through focus group interviews, and to carry out ethnographic studies of early childhood centres. These address research question one:

1. What are the key elements of programme quality in relation to the Strands and Goals of *Te Whāriki*, which should be the focus of evaluation practice?

A follow-on project focuses on action research, and addresses research question two:

2. How can these features which characterise effective practice in early childhood centres be implemented into a framework for curriculum evaluation?

A final phase will involve the production of a resources for use by early childhood practitioners in centres.

Information and consultation

A literature review (Cubey & Dalli 1996) provided a guide to the key issues that underlie the design of any evaluation framework. This showed:

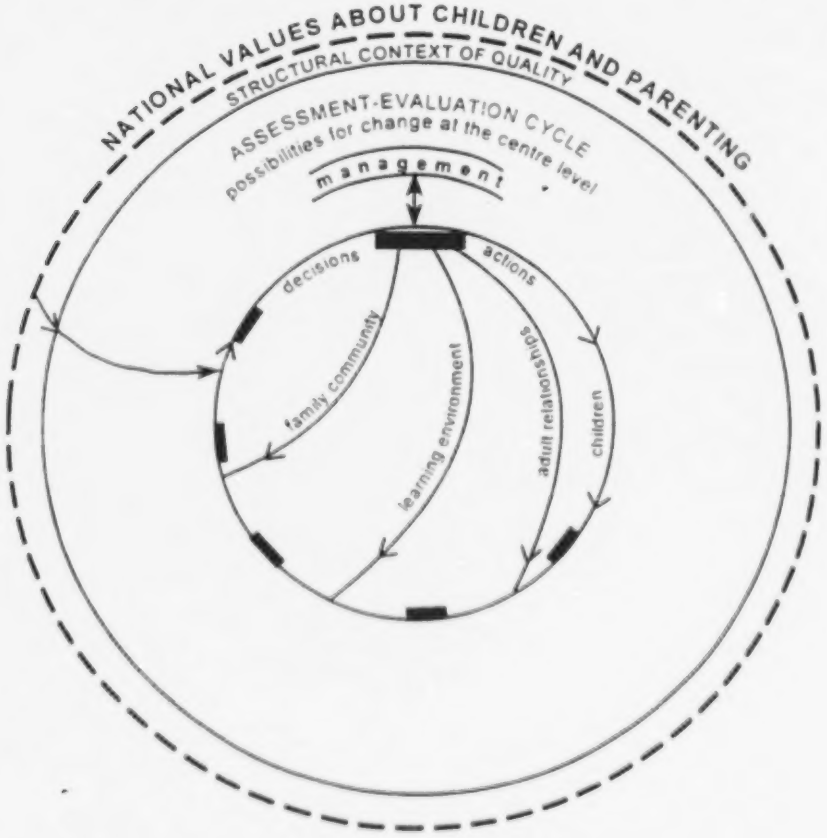
- the importance of evaluation in relation to quality;
- the need for the evaluation of a programme to be consistent with the philosophy and values underlying the curriculum (i.e., *Te Whäriki*);
- the strong support from the literature of an approach to programme planning and evaluation which sits well with *Te Whäriki*

Haggerty's study on the use of video as a tool for professional development (Haggerty, 1996, 1998) provides an overview of, firstly the theoretical context *Te Whāriki* within the international spectrum of curriculum theory and critical pedagogy, but secondly demonstrates the role action research and professional development support can play in the process of reflection, planning, and evaluation.

We are mindful too of the work undertaken by the Pascal-Bertram *Effective Early Learning* (EEL) project in the UK (Pascal & Bertram, 1996, in Pascal, 1996.) The EEL model of two "black box" interactions - "child involvement" and "adult engagement" - is a useful approach which avoids trying to measure everything. The scope of the Pascal-Bertram measures are, however, much broader than is intended in our focus which is limited to the implementation of the curriculum.

In consultation with Margaret Carr regarding her Project for Assessing Children's Experiences (1998), the following model for formative assessment and evaluation was developed. This "Bronfenbrenner-like" framework identifies the key components of any assessment and evaluation process. It also sets the contextual framework for assessment and evaluation: limiting the focus to aspects that could be changed at the centre level. Yet there is recognition of the impact of the wider context on centre practice. Staff working in centres need to be able to clarify what is and is not possible for them to change.

Further Model for Formative Assessment and Evaluation Using the Principles and Framework of Te Whāriki



Focus Group Interviews

In a series of focus group interviews there were consultations with key people: representatives of different early childhood service groups, researchers, and people involved in professional development with teachers. The intention was to address research question one. The broad themes regarding programme quality that consistently arose within the focus groups were: adult responsiveness, reciprocal relationships, empowerment, and respect. The following model, linked to *Te Whāriki*, was developed to provide a holistic framework for assessment and evaluation and a guide for the ethnographic observations in centres.

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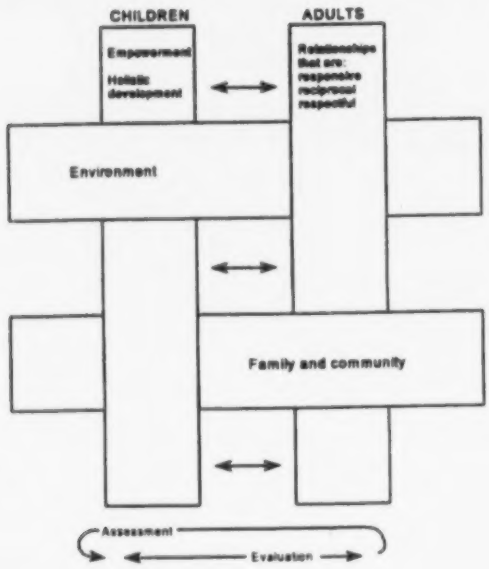
A Holistic Framework for Observation/Evaluation Relationships



At the end of the consultation process we were given strong directions that:

- We begin our framework guided by the Principles of *Te Whāriki*.
- We identify some key "windows" that are rich for evaluation purposes in relation to each strand of *Te Whāriki*. It is not realistic to evaluate (or assess) against all 26 goals or 117 outcomes for children as stated in *Te Whāriki*.
- We combine and connect the assessment and evaluation frameworks.

Ethnographic studies

The sample included seven "effective practice" centres who were confidently working with *Te Whāriki*. These centres cater for different age groupings of children, and include different services with different philosophies (childcare centres, kindergartens, and playcentres). Researchers carried out week-long ethnographic studies. The observational method drew in part on ethnography (e.g., Fetterman, 1989). The approach to observations was semi-structured with a more contracted time frame than traditional ethnography (Anderson, 1992, p. 155). In order to investigate what is going on in centres in terms of how the strands of *Te Whāriki* were being implemented effectively in the programme, we focused our observations on individual staff members, individual children, and specific learning-playing-caring contexts.

During a preliminary interview with supervisory teachers/adults, we negotiated which contexts to observe, by exploring questions based on Margaret Carr's progressive framework for assessment which she called "decision points in learning stories" (Carr, 1997c):

a) finding something of interest (Belonging)

b) being involved (Wellbeing)

c) engaging with challenge and persisting when difficulties arise (Exploration)

d) expressing a point of view (Communication)

e) taking responsibility (Contribution)

Analysis

The analyses of the observations using NUD*IST were related back to the five strands of *Te Whäriki*. Case studies were constructed of each of the centres. The purpose was not to evaluate the seven "effective practice" centres but to provide rich descriptive observations of children, adults, and learning and teaching contexts, which expressed the particular philosophy and focus of each centre. Through the construction of the case studies the concept of the Teaching Story emerged as an idea. Given that the Learning Story (Carr, 1997a) was a framework for assessment of the individual child, it seemed an appropriate parallel strategy to focus on the adult as a teacher as the crucial facilitator in children's learning and development.

The researchers prepared, for each centre, an overall summary of the observations across the strands of *Te Whäriki* which we called a Centre Teacher Story. This began by developing Learning Stories for a small number of children. Teaching Stories were constructed for individual adults, using the concept developed from the focus groups of "Responsive, Reciprocal, Respectful Relationships". Each centre's Teaching Story was developed by scrutinising and appraising the observational transcripts of (a) adults; (b) children; and (c) specific learning/teaching contexts of the centre. The researchers by now had an inkling that the process of analysis itself through the construction of Teaching Stories held the clues for a possible evaluative tool (Podmore & May, with Mara, 1998).

A Learning and Teaching Story approach to assessment and evaluation

We proceeded to develop an assessment and evaluation framework that combines processes of "Learning Stories that are holistic and empower learners" (Carr) and "Teaching Stories that create responsive, reciprocal, and respectful relationships with people, places, and things". The connections of this Learning and Teaching Story framework to the Principles of *Te Whäriki* should be noted. The framework highlights the crucial facilitating role of adults as teachers who:

- observe and listen to children

- provide a learning environment
- make connections with family and community
- are supported by management policies and processes

The researchers sought to ensure that the philosophy of *Te Whāriki;* which allows (and indeed requires) each centre to develop or "weave" their own programme around the Principles Strands and Goals, be reflected in any framework for evaluation. The proposed framework uses the concept of Learning and Teaching Stories which are constructed or "woven" by each centre in the spirit of *Te Whāriki*. The researchers are convinced that this self reflective/weaving process is necessary to enhance the quality and effectiveness of early childhood teaching.

Developing a framework for the Teaching Story

From the Centre Teaching Stories constructed with the case study data the researchers identified an element reflective of each Strand of *Te Whāriki* to provide the focus for observation of the programme, and in particular the role of adults as teachers within it. The Learning and Teaching Story Framework (overleaf) is the result. This uses the child's voice to provide the initial questions centres need to ask of themselves as they begin their journey of evaluation. These five questions asked from a child's perspective:

- capture the essence of the case study teaching stories which are derived from the observation data and its subsequent analysis;
- are designed to guide a centre's reflection on the effectiveness of their programme in relation to the strands of *Te Whāriki*;
- sit alongside their respective elements of the Learning Story framework;
- identify the key tasks of an effective teacher who can provide responsive, respectful, reciprocal relationships in ensuring that the centre programme has positive outcomes for children;
- provide information about the quality of programmes by encapsulating the key research on quality;
- provide the framework for the analysis of observations towards constructing a centre's own Teaching Story.

Rationale for a "Child's Voice"

The idea of focusing on the "child's voice" in defining and evaluating quality is consistent with current understanding of early childhood centre quality. Langsted (1994) and Jensen (1994) have documented how in Denmark children's perspectives have been included in definitions of high quality early childhood services. In New Zealand, the importance of focusing on children's perspectives is also highlighted by Anne Smith's work (see Smith, 1995).

The "child's questions" link the Teaching Stories approach to evaluation with the key elements of programme quality in relation to the Strands and Goals of *Te Whāriki*. The rationale underlying the specific questions asked is based on recent research and theoretical work in early childhood education and human development.

A Framework For Assessment And Evaluation Using Learning And Teaching Stories

	A Learning Story for children (Carr 1998)	A Teaching Story for adults		Theoretical base
	Dispositions for Learning	**A Child's Voice**	**Adult relationships are responsive, reciprocal and respectful when they:**	
Belonging	Finding anything of interest here	How do you appreciate and understand my interests and abilities and those of my family?	Appreciate Understand children and families	Ecological context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) dispositions (Carr, 1997b; Katz, 1993) Cultural context (McNaughton, 1995)
Wellbeing	Being involved	How do you meet my daily needs with care and sensitive consideration?	Show care and sensitive consideration	Respect (Gerber, 1984) reciprocal sensitive interactions (Howes, Phillips, & Whitebrook, 1992) social space (Katz, 1991) temperament (Thomas, Chess, & Brian, 1970; Kohnstamm, 1988) Emotional climate of learning (Smiley & Dweck, 1994)
Exploration	Engaging with challenge and persisting when difficulties arise	How do you engage my mind, offer challenges, and extend my world?	Engage children and extend their horizons	Guided participation scaffolding (Bruner, 1995; Vygotsky, 1987) Schemas (Meade, 1995) Engagement (Pascal, 1996) Motivation (Smiley & Dweck, 1994)
Communication	Expressing a point of view	How do you invite me to listen and communicate, and respond to my own particular efforts?	Invite and respond to children's language	Joint attention (Rogoff, 1990) responsive communication (Howes, 1983, 1986) inter-subjectivity (Rogoff, 1990)
Contribution	Taking resonsibility	How do you encourage and facilitate my pendeavours to be part of group?	Encourage and facilitate a role for individuals in a group	Joint attention (Rogoff, 1990) equal power (Smith, 1996b) (Vygotsky, 1987) Joint problem solving.

(a) Belonging

"How do you appreciate and understand my interests and abilities and those of my family?" This question is grounded in ecological approaches to human development which emphasise responsive learning contexts and reciprocal interaction (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and a socialisation model which views children's learning within family and cultural contexts (McNaughton, 1995). It is also connected to emergent work on children's dispositions for learning (Carr, 1997b; Katz, 1993).

(b) Well-being

"How do you meet my daily needs with care and sensitive consideration?" is a question which emphasises the importance of respectful relationships with adults to the wellbeing of infants in early childhood centres (Gerber, 1984). Observational research on adult-child interactions in childcare centres highlights the significant relationship between adults' reciprocal, sensitive interactions, and children's development (e.g., Howes, Phillips, & Whitebrook, 1992; Smith, 1996a). Research on temperament is also relevant to nurturing infants'/young children's wellbeing and responding to their emotional needs with care (Thomas, Chess, & Birch, 1970; Kohnstamm, 1988).

(c) Exploration

"How do you engage my mind, offer challenges, and extend my world?" This question is connected to theoretical concepts of guided participation and scaffolding, based on Bruner's and Vygotsky's (1987) perspectives. Young children's need for challenging extensions of their thinking is evident in recent research on schemas (Meade, 1995). The "child's question" here is also consistent with the Pascal-Bertram framework for developing effectiveness in early learning settings, where the processes of "adult engagement" and "child involvement" are key components (Pascal, 1996). In view of Dweck's motivational research, extending the world of young children who are prone to set performance goals but avoid difficulty is also important (e.g., Smiley & Dweck, 1994). Intellectual and physical challenges are both relevant.

(d) Communication

The "child's question" here is:*"How do you invite me to listen and communicate, and respond to my own particular efforts?"* The theoretical concepts of joint attention (Rogoff, 1990; Smith, 1996b), responsive communication (e.g., Howes, 1983, 1986; Howes, Phillips, & Whitebrook, 1992), and intersubjectivity (Rogoff, 1990, Bruner, 1995) underlie the importance of reciprocal communication, and shared understanding, between adults and young children. These are among the key elements of communication which characterise high quality interactive processes in early childhood centre settings.

(e) Contribution

"How do you encourage and facilitate my endeavours to be part of the wider group?" Affirmation of children through their interactions with adults, and encouragement to learn

alongside others, are supported theoretically by work on joint attention (Rogoff, 1990); joint problem solving, and equal power (Smith, 1996b; see also Vygotsky, 1987).

Elaborating the Process

The focus of most observation in New Zealand centres has been on children rather than on the role of adults in supporting children's learning or the dynamics of particular contexts. The Learning and Teaching Story framework both broadens the scope of and tightens the focus. Similarly, it is designed to lead the adults into a process of self-reflection and then action.

The process of elaborating and refining these questions from the abstract to the specific is a key phase in the current a action research trials. Beginning with the "child's questions" it involves time for reflection and action to answer the following kinds of questions:

- How can we plan better for individual children?
- How can we improve our own teaching effectiveness?
- Are there changes needed in the environment?
- What do we need for professional development/training ?
- What are the policy and/or fiscal implications for management?

Questions Arising

The first stage of this research has concluded with its own series of questions:

- Is the Learning and Teaching Stories framework for assessment and evaluation sufficiently robust to work in centres that are of medium or poorer quality, and able to be used by adults without full teacher training?
- Is the Learning and Teaching Stories framework for assessment and evaluation sufficiently flexible to be appropriate and meaningful in a broader range of kindergartens, playcentres and childcare centres than those used in the development phases of both projects?
- In what ways can individual centres incorporate their own programme philosophies though constructing their own Learning and Teaching Stories?
- What kinds of mechanisms need to be built into the framework to ensure an ongoing process of observation, reflection and change by teachers and management?
- What kind of mechanisms and resources are needed to facilitate the assessment and evaluation process for more widespread use by teachers that can be both efficient and meaningful?
- In what ways does the process effect changes to improve quality in relation to: children, adults, environment, families, and support of management?

Action Research

The "questions arising" listed underpin the second major research question:

- *How can these features which characterise effective practice in early childhood centres be implemented into a framework for curriculum evaluation?*

The current phase of the project which began in April 1998 involves an action research trial, resulting eventually in the development of resources for practitioners on assessment and evaluation.

The action research is sited in three geographic locations attached to existing professional development programmes for practitioners funded by the Ministry of Education to support the implementation of *Te Whäriki*. Selected early childhood centres are working alongside a professional development co-ordinator. The playcentres, kindergartens, and childcare centres included in this phase are of average quality, in terms of having fewer qualified staff and less experience in implementing, assessing, and evaluating in regard to *Te Whäriki*.

In each of the three regions, a professional development person/project researcher, supported by one of the research directors, is co-ordinating the action research. Drawing on Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988) framework, and on approaches used in related New Zealand studies (Haggerty, 1996, 1998), an action research spiral approach is being implemented. It includes spirals with planning, acting and observing, and reflecting (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). The rationale for this approach is based in part on the evidence that action research "is considered to enhance professional learning and to foster reflective practice" in early childhood education (Rodd, 1994, p. 144).

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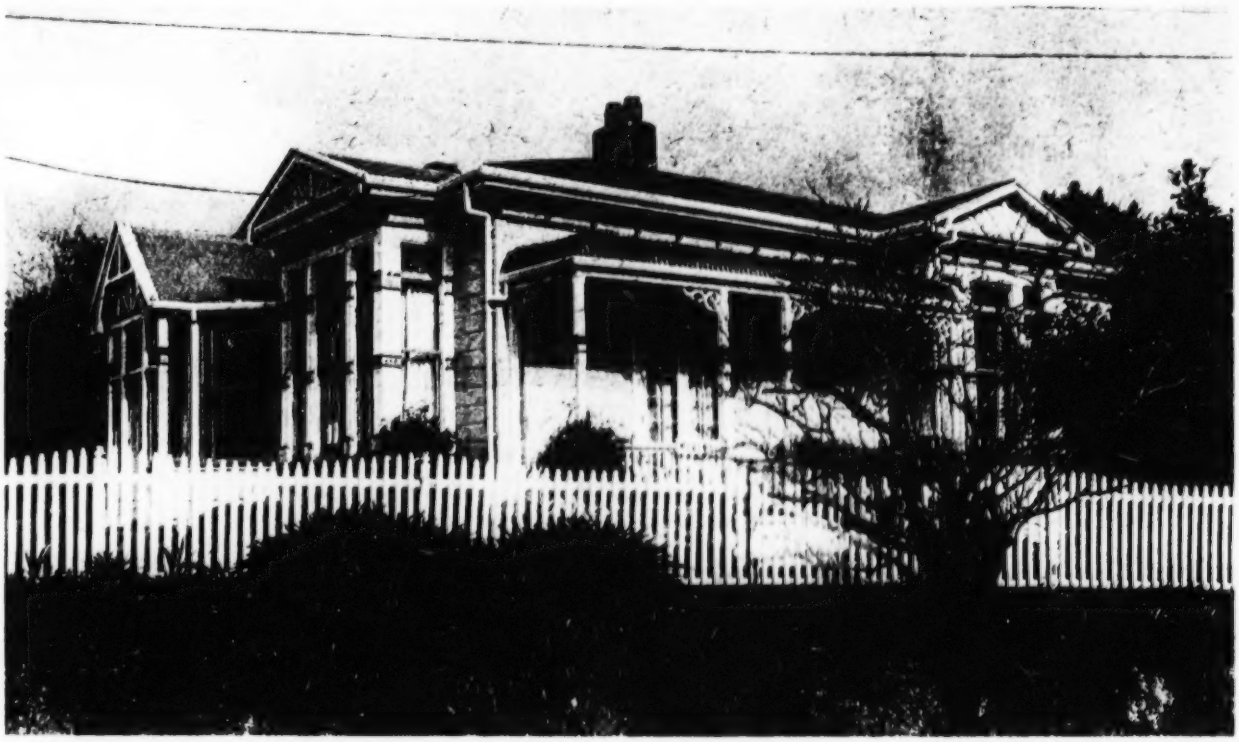

Establishment

The Institute was established in 1995 as a joint initiative by Victoria University of Wellington and Wellington College of Education to promote quality in:

- children's learning
- teacher education
- professional development
- research
- policy studies
- information services

Aims

The Institute aims to bring together early childhood teachers, researchers and other professionals to work collaboratively on a range of projects to contribute to the knowledge base for early childhood education.

Staff

Director, Dr Helen May, Professor of Early Childhood Teacher Education; Carmen Dalli, Associate Director, Senior Lecturer; Sophie Alcock, Lecturer; Sally Peters, Lecturer.

Academic staff in the Wellington College of Education School for Early Childhood Teacher Education are members of the Institute.

Publications

A catalogue of publications for purchase is available on request.

Location

The Institute is located on the Victoria University of Wellington campus at 89 Fairlie Terrace.

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